



Chicago Metropolitan  
Agency for Planning

[www.cmap.illinois.gov](http://www.cmap.illinois.gov)

# Operation Native Plants:

*A community planning project for high school students*

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# Operation Native Plants:

## What is the Problem?

Native plant species are endangered due to new development of the region. Not only does this new development remove green space from the environment, it also removes an important natural detoxifier of the land. Native plants help purify runoff, provide oxygen and nutrients, and natural beauty. The plants that replace the native species are high maintenance and require the use of harmful fertilizers.

## Preferred Regional Scenario

CMAP's *GO TO 2040*

Preferred Regional Scenario states that “water...as a critical natural resource preserves the overall ecological health and diversity of the region.” “Providing recreation options and protecting ecosystem function, and to conserve natural resources. This requires increasing the resources devoted to protection of an open space network, designing communities to meet environmental goals, taking a proactive approach to both supply and demand for energy and water.”

## Solutions

Volunteer opportunities for high school students that partner with nurseries to add native plants to areas of new development where native plants had been previously removed. Students will volunteer hours to these nurseries in exchange for native plants. These students will also benefit from learning about the environment and what native plants contribute.





# What to do:

## Step One

Take charge. Start or create your own group at your school involving the environment.

## Step Two

Get others involved. Recruit other students to volunteer. Get them excited and informed about the effects and benefits of native plants and how they can help our environment.

## Step Three

Create a partnership with a local nursery. Ask them if you could exchange plants for unpaid services. This way you can help your environment, local businesses, get community service hours, and inform others about native plants.

## Step Four

Survey your community. Notice areas where you see a lot of build-up on the sides of roads and on curbs. Check to see if these areas contain native plants. Record these places for your future plans.

## Step Five

Do background research. Find out what plants would be the best for those areas. Is it shady? Does it get a lot of sun? Is it a large area? Observe the area and ensure you know which plants would be the best way to go for it.

## Step Six

Put your plan into action! You've gotten this far, don't put it to waste! Get your group to make this plan really happen.



# The Game Plan

## Fall

First, start recruiting high school students, get people involved. Second, make necessary partnerships with local or other nurseries. Determine existing conditions in your community and where in it native plants need should go.

## Winter

Start to volunteer. Keep your partnership with the nursery in action. Stay to your word and stay determined. Decide where plants need to be. Do your background research and connect the characteristics of needed plants with the environment that they are needed in.

## Spring

Make your exchange. Bank in for your hard work with the nursery. Use your volunteer hours and exchange them for the plants you need. Start planting them where they're needed. Promote your accomplishments to other companies and nurseries. Get your successful experience out there as an example for other students.

## Summer

Maintain those plants. Keep up with them. Continue to volunteer and start scouting for the following year. Spread the word.

## Wrap Up

By the end of each cycle, students should be able to expand the project by helping neighboring communities join the cause be informed as well.





### **Projected Outcomes**

After all that hard work, you'll know it was worth something. If enough people get involved, you will be able to increase the air and water quality in your community and bring down the pollution level in your neighborhood. With this students will have learned more about the effects of native plants and understand how and why they helped. The best scenario we can hope for is that this spreads. Let this be an ongoing program that can spread through not only other communities, neighborhoods, or regions, but through other cities and states as well.

### **How it Came to Be**

The FLIP Environment group stumbled along this idea while brainstorming ideas about recycling. When we first began, we wanted to start a recycling program where there wasn't any, for instance in certain schools and downtown areas. We thought about it, and decided that recycling was something that lots of people already know about. We wanted to come up with something that helped our environment, that was overlooked, simple, and could be done by high school students. Inspired by a trip that we took to Prairie Crossing, we decided that native plants were very useful, but hardly used. We then took action ourselves and got to work!

# Resources

### ***Prairie Crossing.***

A planned community that uses conservation design and native plants. <http://www.prairiecrossing.com/pc/site/index.html>

### ***The Chicago Center for Green Technology***

A learning center that assists people and communities live greener life styles. CCTG has tours available and a library of resources.

### ***Millennium Park, Lurie Garden***

The Lurie Garden grows plants that are native to the area. Lectures and workshops are available.

[http://www.millenniumpark.org/artandarchitecture/lurie\\_garden\\_plant\\_list.html](http://www.millenniumpark.org/artandarchitecture/lurie_garden_plant_list.html)

### ***The Conservation Foundation.***

A non-profit land and watershed protection agency. <http://www.theconservationfoundation.org/>

***Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center.*** A resource for finding native plants, and how to care for them in particular communities. <http://www.wildflower.org/>





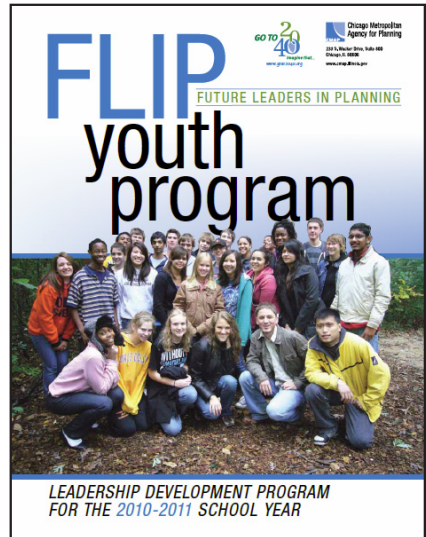
## About CMAP

The Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP) was created in 2005 as the comprehensive regional planning organization for the northeastern Illinois counties of Cook, DuPage, Kane, Kendall, Lake, McHenry, and Will. By state and federal law, CMAP is responsible for developing *GO TO 2040*, metropolitan Chicago's first truly comprehensive regional plan. The agency projects that metropolitan Chicago will gain 2.8 million new residents and 1.8 million jobs in the next three decades. The *GO TO 2040* planning campaign will develop and implement strategies to address that projected growth. Scheduled for completion in 2010, the plan will shape the region's transportation system and development patterns, while also addressing the natural environment, economic development, housing, education, human services and other factors shaping quality of life. See [www.cmap.illinois.gov](http://www.cmap.illinois.gov) and [www.goto2040.org](http://www.goto2040.org) for more information.

## About FLIP

Are you concerned about having better parks? How about the streets in your community? Have you ever wondered why the mall is where it is? Why your school is located where it is? Do you wish someone would do something make life better for you, your family, or your community? The Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP) is looking for high school participants to learn about our region while interacting with other students from various counties. CMAP is interested in your ideas about how to make Northeastern Illinois a better place to live, go to school, work, and play. Please apply to be part of Future Leaders in Planning.

Future Leaders in Planning (FLIP) is a leadership development opportunity offered free-of-charge to students who can contribute ideas to help create a better future for our region. It began in September 2008 and participants in the 2009 program will learn more about the northeastern region and share their thoughts with other teens from Cook, DuPage, Kane, Kendall,



Lake, McHenry, and Will counties. Participants will also meet and interact with select regional leaders who make key planning decisions in our communities.

To stay updated on FLIP, meet other youth in the region, and blog about issues affecting your community, visit <http://www.facebook.com/pages/CMAPs-FLIP-Future-Leaders-In-Planning-program>